



## Review of 'One Hundred Houses for One Hundred European Architects of the Twentieth Century'

Clarke, P. (2004). Review of 'One Hundred Houses for One Hundred European Architects of the Twentieth Century'. *Perspective, The Journal of The Royal Society of Ulster Architects*, 13(6), 78-79.

[Link to publication record in Ulster University Research Portal](#)

### Published in:

Perspective, The Journal of The Royal Society of Ulster Architects

### Publication Status:

Published (in print/issue): 01/11/2004

### Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

### General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via Ulster University's Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

### Take down policy

The Research Portal is Ulster University's institutional repository that provides access to Ulster's research outputs. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact [pure-support@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:pure-support@ulster.ac.uk).

# ONE HUNDRED HOUSES FOR ONE HUNDRED EUROPEAN ARCHITECTS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By: Gennaro Postiglione

• 78

The Belgian architect Stéphane Beel when asked about designing a house for himself replied "I would much rather be surprised by someone else." Frank Gehry recently remarked on what it feels like to design a house for himself, "It's torture." It seems architects houses are the equivalent of a busman's holiday.

Gennaro Postiglione's book of 100 architects' houses is the result of research carried out at the Department of Architectural Planning at the Polytechnic of Milan by MEAM Net (Modern European Architecture – Museum Network). The aim is to increase awareness and to safeguard the architectural heritage of the homes of some of Europe's leading architects. A web site ([www.meamnet.polimi.it](http://www.meamnet.polimi.it)) and this new book published by Taschen makes the material available to anyone interested in studying these unique houses.

We begin our glimpse 'through the keyhole' of architects' domestic space with a short introductory essay 'Domestic Interiors and Cultural Praxis' by Postiglione which explores the cultural value of private domestic space. This is followed by an expansive catalogue of 100 individual houses listed in alphabetical order of architects. A lot of information is compacted into each featured house, with photographs of each architect, the house, text, drawings and bibliography. Houses by lesser-known architects such as Eugene Liebaut are given coverage amidst the pages of the usual suspects.

Günther Domenig's twenty year design odyssey with his 'Steinhaus' in Austria or the minimalist regime of John Pawsons Notting Hill house reveal perhaps the dominance of architectural abstraction over the



The book covers many of the great innovators such as Auguste Perret and Jean Prouvé and includes the often over looked 'Italian school' of Albini, Figini and Rogers, as well as the irrepressible Gio Ponti. Many of these houses would be sidelined to the forgotten pages of magazines were it not for this book's reassessment.

simple pleasure of dwelling. Amusingly a description by Le Corbusier of what for him transformed his rooftop apartment at 24 rue Nungesser-et-Coli, was the arrival of a large comfortable sofa, "...suddenly the whole place looked snug, just like a real home." Not the language we associate with the 'machine for living in'. The Eames Lounge Chair, present in almost every architect's interior, represents the perfect icon of domestic comfort with design ideals.

The Smithsonian's Upper Lawn Pavilion at Fonthill with the famed Citroen DS outside is featured, as is Aldo van Eyck's Amsterdam apartment. These small projects were important catalysts for wider architectural ideas. The Smithsonian's 'Art of Inhabitation' is beautifully revealed in the way they recorded the seasonal patterns and shifts at their 'solar pavilion' while Van Eyck's notion of the city as a large house is implicit in the layout of his small flat designed for his family.



What is clear from this book is that many of these architects were part of a wide circle of influences and cross currents such as Team X. Exchanging ideas and visiting one another's projects, the debate was always wider than the need for personal publicity.

Charlotte Perland's unique and modest design philosophy is expressed in her small chalet in the Savoy region and Adam Caruso's London house and studio illustrates an honest domestic realism with a constructive poetry. Asplund's wonderful summerhouse south of Stockholm can be viewed alongside Michael Scott's white 'Internationalist' house 'Geragh' at Sandycove in Dublin. Built at the same time and both enjoying extraordinary sites, they raise questions of contrasting regionalism.

The book covers many of the great

innovators such as Auguste Perret and Jean Prouvé and includes the often overlooked 'Italian school' of Albini, Figini and Rogers, as well as the irrepressible Gio Ponti. Many of these houses would be sidelined to the forgotten pages of magazines were it not for this book's reassessment. Perhaps a further European dimension could be explored by tracing the work of such émigrés to America as Albert Frey and Richard Neutra, who with many others, contributed to the development of the modern house.

As we look at these houses we are left to imagine the individual agonies and ecstasies of each architect's search for perfection. Perhaps Sverre Fehn in Norway is one of the few to follow Beel's advice, by choosing to live in a house designed by another architect. Built in 1930 by Arne Korsmo, Fehn has painstakingly

restored and saved this modern house from demolition. For him the most important surprise of his 'architect's house' is looking out of the window towards the fjord "to see the dialogue between the snow and the colour of the winter sky." ●

#### Paul Clarke

#### One Hundred Houses For One Hundred European Architects Of The Twentieth Century

By: Gennaro Postiglione

Published By: Taschen

Price: £19.99

www: Taschen.com

Based in Barcelona, Actar are a multidisciplinary collective that publish and distribute experimental books on art, architecture, graphic design and photography. They have been described as "cultural accelerators" mixing the boundaries of critic, mediator and architect in an effort to stimulate debate. Manuel Gausa, one of the founding members, has described their practice as a "virtual network to launch ideas."

Verb, one of Actar's main architectural publications, splits into two formats: a monograph that features individual buildings, or a boogazine that explores a particular theme. This second volume of the boogazine format follows the earlier Verb Processing, which looked at the relationship of information and authorship. Verb Matters conducts "a survey of material possibilities in the context of the information age." With its colourful translucent flex-bound

cover and punchy graphics, we are taken on an itinerary of diverse ideas.

A step-by-step history of the information age, discusses some of the critical achievements in the development of digital machines. How in effect, data processing has shaped the way we construct and conceive architecture. The essay 'Building Intelligence' by Neil Gershenfeld and Raffi Krikorian from MIT Lab is included perhaps unintentionally to warn us, before we get carried away with technology, that 'geek speak' has an unlimited and unique capacity to confuse the simple process of communication. Deep Blue, that famous IBM computer that defeated Garry Kasparov at chess in 1997, signalled the end of our innocence in out-thinking machines. Now we have even started to speak like them. Architectural case studies begin with Diller + Scofidio's Blur Building

designed for the Swiss expo of 2002. A hovering steel superstructure of cables and columns, it disappears in a 'designed' fog produced by fine water jets in the structure. Dematerialised into a strange weather formation, where the weight of building is seemingly vaporized, this project illustrates how architecture can play with our perception of matter.

OMA's material research for the Prada stores is discussed by Chris van Duijn, who explains their search for transparency and an answer to the practical need to hang clothes in Prada's high-art fashion shops. The porous sponge like material they developed involved making many plaster study models with air filled balloons. Working with industrial designers and specialists they have begun a search that has gone well beyond the limits of the Prada commissions.

## VERB MATTERS

Published by: Actar